

HOW TO START A CONTESTED CASE

- 1) Fill out your *Complaint* and other required documents in BLACK ink and signing in BLUE ink, then make 2 copies – one for you and one for the other party.
- 2) File the original *Complaint and required documents* at the Courthouse and pay the [filing fee](#) or complete fee waiver request court form [TF-920 \(3/00\)](#): **Request for Exemption from Payment of Fees**.
- 3) The Clerk will open your case with your *Complaint*. The Clerk will issue you a [Summons](#) and a [Standing Order](#). You will be given two copies of each document. One copy is for your records and the second copy is for the other party. You will also be given a case number. If you filed for a Fee Waiver, the procedure may be different. Check with your local Court.
- 4) Now it is time to SERVE the other party. You MUST serve the other party with 1) a copy of the *Complaint and the required documents*, 2) the copy of the *Summons*, and 3) the copy of the *Standing Order*. You MUST serve these documents by Process Server or Certified Mail/Restricted Delivery/Return Receipt Requested (the green card from the post office). If you have a specific questions on how to serve the other party, see Court form [CIV-106](#) : **How to Serve a Summons**.
- 5) Now you wait. The other party has 20 days after being served to file an *Answer*. If you get the green card back in the mail, keep it in a safe place. Likewise, if you used a process server, keep their *Return of Service* in a safe place. Either of these documents is called a *Proof of Service*.
- 6) If 20 days pass, from the day the other party was served (this is the date signed for on the green card, or indicated as served on the *Return of Service*) and the other party DOES NOT file an *Answer*, you may file for what is called [Default](#). This means you are going to finish your case without the other party being involved. For forms and information, please visit our website.
- 7) If the other party files an *Answer*, the case will go forward as a contested matter and be set on for trial.



THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- ✓ Make TWO copies of everything you file with the court: one for you and one for the other party. The original is the one filed with the court.
- ✓ Always have your case number handy when calling the court. This will help the court staff help you more quickly.
- ✓ Keep your *Proof of Service* in a safe place.

For more information call the Family Law Self-Help Center's Helpline (907) 264-0851 or (866) 279-0851 (outside of Anchorage) or visit www.state.ak.us/courts/selfhelp.htm